

HAF (Holiday Activity and Food) Programme - report on the uptake of the programme as requested for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board – 18th December 2023.

Background

The HAF programme, known as 'Healthy Holidays' in Torbay, was piloted nationally in 2021 and funded by the DfE (Department for Education). The Government then announced their commitment for a further three years (2022, 2023 and 2024).

The core aims of the HAF programme are to ensure that children and young people (CYP) who are eligible for income-based free school meals (FSM) have access to food, physical activities, and enrichment activities during the longest holiday periods when their school is closed, i.e. tackling 'holiday hunger' and isolation. These holiday periods are the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods.

All HAF provision is to be available for a minimum of four hours per day, for four days per week and for one week in Easter, one week over the Christmas period and for four weeks in the Summer holiday.

Both 2021 and 2022 saw some unpredicted challenges with COVID-19 and Strep A impacting on a lot of the HAF delivery across the country, but overall, we have seen good take up of the holiday club offer in Torbay and have had some brilliant feedback from parents/carers, children and young people accessing the programme and from the providers running the holiday clubs.

Nationally 2023 has seen challenges with the cost of delivering holiday clubs rising, staff recruitment concerns for some providers, and locally we have seen that the unpredictability of the weather can impact on attendance.

How we deliver our HAF provision in Torbay:

The DfE allocate a set amount of grant funding for Torbay HAF, of which 10% is then allocated for administration costs, and the remainder is allocated for face-to-face holiday club provision.

We operate a procurement process to determine the best-placed holiday club providers in Torbay to meet the necessary requirements for the HAF Programme and work with those providers to ensure that the standards set out by the DfE and by Torbay Council are met.

We look to ensure that our HAF provision offers suitable activities for primary and secondary aged children and young people, provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), is geographically well situated and is accessible during the main holiday periods. We try to ensure there is a good mix of school-based and community-based venues and that the holiday clubs offer a good range of activities for the children and young people.

We also focus on offering spaces to children and young people who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) in Torbay to offer them the opportunity to socialise with others during the school holiday periods. We made this decision locally because we have a relatively high number of children and young people who are EHE and this has increased since the pandemic. We understand that attending the holiday clubs can offer so much more than just ensuring that children have access to food, and we wanted to share the opportunity with children who wouldn't normally have the opportunity to spend time with other children or adults outside of their home environment.

HAF has a Steering Group made up of colleagues from Children’s Services (Participation Team, Virtual School Extended Duties, Early Years, Learning and Development Team and chaired by the Director of Children’s Services), Public Health, Active Devon, Sanctuary Housing, and the Sports and Events Team. The Steering Group help to evaluate the applications from potential providers, help guide and advise the Project Manager, visit the holiday clubs when they’re in session, undertake quality assurance visits and checks, and ensure that the whole programme is fulfilling its intentions and meeting the needs of eligible families in Torbay.

We have developed strong working relationships with Cornwall, Plymouth and Devon, and meet and email regularly to discuss our plans, share challenges, discuss trends and learn from each other. Devon and Torbay have a very close working relationship and agree to use funded places where eligibility is checked to prevent families from having to cross the border where they don’t go to school in the same county – this equates to a very small number of children each year, but we unlike other areas, have agreed to work together to meet the needs of the children where possible.

We work closely with our national advisors from Childcare Works/Hempsall’s and we have previously presented at their request in a best practice webinar.

Torbay HAF Data:

Easter	2021	2022	2023
No. of providers	6	8	10
No. of holiday clubs	12	16	20
Total places available	397	580	621
Total no. of CYP reached	321*	998	947
No. of FSM eligible CYP	321	796	764
No. of FSM Primary CYP	239	602	637
No. of FSM Secondary CYP	82	194	127

**Only recorded FSM eligible CYP*

Summer	2021	2022	2023
No. of providers	8	7	8
No. of holiday clubs	21	17	19
Total places available	856	711	574
Total no. of CYP reached	1,496	3,591	1,571
No. of FSM eligible CYP	1,275	2,606	1,229
No. of FSM Primary CYP	986	2,225	947
No. of FSM Secondary CYP	289	381	282

Christmas	2021	2022	2023
No. of providers	9	7	9
No. of holiday clubs	12	13	19
Total places available	696	545	606
Total no. of CYP reached	635	507	N/A
No. of FSM eligible CYP	629	449	N/A
No. of FSM Primary CYP	563	337	N/A
No. of FSM Secondary CYP	72	112	N/A

Total annual data	2021	2022	2023
No. of holiday clubs	45	46	58
Total places available	1,949	1,836	1,801
Total CYP reached	2,452	5,096	N/A
No. of FSM CYP	2,225	3,851	N/A
No. of FSM Primary CYP	1,788	3,164	N/A
No. of FSM Secondary CYP	443	687	N/A

Narrative:

The Pandemic – the Christmas of 2021 was a particularly challenging period for a lot of families, as we were told as a nation to only socialise in our bubbles and not to travel. For many families, they were not in a position to risk children socialising with others outside of their household due to the health concerns or other vulnerabilities of their family or extended family, and risking the plans they were able to have over the Christmas period. We didn't fill the paid places, but that was echoed throughout England, and there was no criticism from the DfE.

Summer 2022 – We saw a spike in our reach which wasn't intended, but it was down to how the providers were able to be flexible with the number of children they were able to work with and one specific provider reported that they had seen 3,039 children – the provider was asked to check this figure, and they confirmed it was correct. It was also the first real holiday without a real concern of covid and we saw much more family engagement than previous holidays.

In Summer 2022 we also ran a HAF extension pilot specifically aimed at the older cohort of young people. Providers ran several pop-up and pilot activities purely over the Summer holiday period. Providers reported that they were well received by young people across the Bay and the outcomes from this pilot helped create the Community based Youth Clubs proposal which is now in place.

Christmas 2022 – We were unable to fill the paid places with FSM eligible children, but again, this was a national trend. We have discussed the concern with providers for Christmas this year and they have asked to promote their provision with additional information about what they have planned such as hampers, Father Christmas visits etc. to make the offer as attractive as possible,

but we have agreed to reflect on uptake in January with the Procurement Team as we can change our allocated percentage of the budget for Christmas 2024 if required.

National and South West data:

The DfE have presented some data for the South West from this Summer – this is the first time that we have received such feedback and we reflected on this in our South West Cluster Meeting recently. It was recognised by the DfE that much more work was needed to be able to understand the data in relation to the national picture because of the challenges that the geography brings to the South West.

Information in purple is from the DfE

Reach - The national reach figure for FSM eligible children Summer 2023 is 23.7%. The average reach for South West LAs was 21.5%, a decrease of 6.5% from summer 2022.

Torbay's reach for Summer 2023 was 21.6% (Devon was 17%)

South West LAs reported that there was an 19% decrease in the total number of FSM eligible children who attended HAF provisions over summer 2023 holidays, in comparison to summer 2022.

Age groups

- Secondary aged participation has increased significantly for the Southern authorities with the South West cluster recording a 6% increase in secondary engagement.
- Primary aged attendance has decreased by 24% across South West authorities.

Census Changes

- The number of FSM children in England has risen by almost 6.5%. Amongst South West LAs the number has risen by 6.71%.
- The secondary age cohort has risen by 4% nationally and 4.6% in South West authorities.
- FSM eligible SEND cohort has also risen by 3% nationally, South West authorities have seen an increase of 3.29%.

Funding: The total grant funding Torbay has received has decreased despite an increase in the number of children being eligible for Free School Meals:

	Total grant funding allocated	FSM eligible children and young people
2021	£611,890	5,179
2022	£575,560	5,216
2023	£548,820	5,451
2024	Not yet confirmed £548,820	

We have had fun!

There have been a huge number of activities available for children and young people to date, and we hope that we can continue to add to this list of activities. Some of the activities on offer were nature walks, cycling and bike maintenance, go carting, zorbing, sporting activities, crafting, bushcraft cooking, silent discos, surfing, mobile petting zoo, drama productions, music production, camping, yoga and many more!

Children and young people also had the opportunity to take home the food that they'd made, craft and artwork, invited parents and carers to talent shows and plays they'd practiced, and had parents and carers join in with learning football tricks and surfing.

They have also taken home activity packs, Christmas presents, food hampers, Easter eggs etc. thanks to some of our holiday club providers and local businesses.

Children and young people learned some new skills such as riding a bike, football trick shots, sign language, surfing, cooking etc., and they have also learned about nutrition, nature, growing fruit and veg, history, maths, caring for animals, and much more.

Children and young people have made new friends, said their confidence had grown and they have most definitely had fun!

Looking ahead:

We have one more year of guaranteed funding and are currently planning the procurement process for this. We are making some changes to increase the reach which includes minimising the time we fund providers for their delivery e.g., only funding four weeks and not the whole holiday period in Summer, and increasing the weighting for cost to try to maximise the budget to push down the overall costs.

We are working with the Business Intelligence Team to better understand the Children's Services data within this, and whilst there is definitely a lot of work needed (at the HAF end) to ensure the data can be better aligned, the first attempt to pull out some of the headlines from this Summer showed us that we had the following children and young people attend:

- 51 Electively Home Educated
- 46 Cared For Children
- 47 Children on a CiN Plan
- 13 Children under a CP Plan
- 12 Other children known to CS
- 32 Single Assessment

Sustainability: We are encouraging providers to become Ofsted registered to ensure that they can deliver holiday club provision in 2025 in the absence of HAF funding and for them to potentially become wraparound childcare providers if/when this is an option.

The intention for 2024 is to continue to deliver good quality, fun and thriving holiday clubs for children and young people in Torbay within the allocated budget.

The learning from HAF and the HAF Extension project has led to the Youth Service group sessions becoming open access, and for the Community Based Youth Clubs funded by Torbay Council including the offer of food and being based in community settings where young people are. We have also looked at our groups offer which includes what we offer for young carers and are starting a new group in Torquay in the new year.

We understand that there are clear links between the numerous groups and activities delivered or funded by Childrens Services and we are currently working on a Youth Hub Strategy and a Communications and Marketing Strategy to incorporate all of the Council engagement and awareness raising activities relating to the Youth Hub in partnership with the Participation Team, current providers and young people. Work is also being undertaken with the Vulnerable Pupils Team, the Youth Justice Service and Safer Communities to ensure our work is better linked, and we have had discussion with Devon Space regarding a potential digital offer for young people in Torbay.

Who has been and is involved:

HAF Providers – past and present: Imagine Torbay Multicultural Group, Kinetics Sports Group, Glo Torbay/Love Enterprise CIC, Premier Education, Lifeworks, Play Torbay, Shear Soccer, Torbay Youth Trust, Roselands Nursey, Great Parks Community Centre, Turning Heads, Sporty Stars, Imagine This.../CDT.

HAF Extension providers: Imagine Torbay Multicultural Group, Cycle Torbay, Shear Soccer, Sound Communities, Love Enterprise CIC.

Community Based Youth Club Providers: The Windmill Centre, Love Enterprise CIC, Plymouth Argyle Trust.

Youth Service group partner providers: Torquay United Community Sports Trust, Reach Outdoors.

Young Carers groups and activities partners: Oldway Tea Rooms, Babbacombe Lions, South Devon College, Orchard Forest School at Lupton House.

A selection of some feedback gathered from providers for the Summer from children and families:

- Past summers have been so difficult for me with 3 children as a parent, you and your team have helped us so much and are so grateful, we are looking forward to christmas!
- I can't believe what you provide, and lunch for free! We've had a great time and will definitely be back.
- We just wanted to say a massive thankyou from the whole family for the efforts put in this summer from yourself and your team! The girls can't wait to get back in the zorbs!
- Both my children have been asked not to return to other Summer Provision. You guys have a special skill to engage children with very high needs, I don't know what I would do without this and the breaks for me.
- Thanks for the past week of activities our kids haven't stopped going about how much fun they have had. They are so peaceful in the evening after the days activities tiring them out!
- My kids absolutely loved holiday camp and have spoken so highly of all the activities they were involved in.
- This is the only place I can leave O and not worry, he just loves coming here and he is dressed and ready at 5am!
- R was great on the first day reassuring us that A would be okay and listened to everything I had to say and how to deal with him in different situations! I left with so much confidence on that first day. Where in other situations I have left feeling unsure if it was the right thing to do sending him! so thankyou for everything.
- Without your camp this summer we would've really struggled. I am so thankful for all the team for keeping my son active and engaged throughout this summer holidays.
- The kids loved glow in the dark dodgeball and have been asking when they can come again. Thankyou!
- I would like to thank all the team at Brixham for the hard work they've put in.
- Very pleased that our sessions were running again this year - children love coming out and camping and seeing some of their friends from last year again. 'Best thing about the holidays!'
- Thankyou for everything you've done this summer. I've seen massive improvements in p's behaviour at home since attending. See you at Christmas!

- K's confidence has grown so much over the last 3 weeks, from being scared to go to dragging me out the door and not wanting to leave your camp is amazing to see. Thanks to you and your team.
- Being a single dad for the last year hasn't been easy and R has been so welcoming and supportive through this summer holidays. This program has helped me out a lot.
- I wish I could come here more - the boys absolutely love it and there just isn't many places that they can run free in a safe environment these days. Thankyou so much for all that you do!
- He has done really well here. There's not many places he feels comfortable and because he's been here for family support sessions he knows it and feels quite safe here. There's not many places where he feels like that. All you staff have been great with him, I can't thank you enough. (J, Nan and foster carer for C, 9)
- My son said he's had the best summer.
- Can't thank you and your team enough for the service you have offered.
- Absolutely amazing club my 3 children had such fun and came back so happy every single day. Thank you so much.
- My children absolutely loved it despite the bad weather! And it's an amazing form of education, sport and socialising! And gives single parents a break too! Thank you so much!
- Very happy with the whole fortnight they attended, my children really enjoyed it. Staff were really great with my kids and understood their individual needs (1- ASD child, 1 with ACEs)
- My son always has a great time, very helpful that he is able to attend whilst I'm working. Lovely team as always at Paignton! ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
- Just a small thank you for letting my children be a part of the HAF club over the summer holidays. With being a single mum and the weather not being great this club has made the holidays so much better. The children get to meet new people, make new friends and have lots of fun. All the staff are amazing and they all go above and beyond to give all the children an amazing time. Also a warm meal/lunch provided if wanted. No judgement and very welcoming. Lots of indoor and outside activities. Something for everyone. This is the best thing my children have ever had the opportunity to be a part of. It is so greatly appreciated. I cannot put into words how much this club has helped us. Thank you. G x
- Good morning. I am grateful to all the workers of the camp for a mega cool and wonderful vacation for the children. You gave me a lot of good moments of positive emotions. The children were happy, constantly smiling. Thank you for the delicious cuisine. I hope to see you next year in the summer. Sincerely, N
- We want to say a big thank you to you and all the staff for giving A a great start to her move to Devon. She loved all of it. We're sorry we never got to do this in person but we will see you again. L
- Thank you for the wonderful activities for the children, they were delighted! :) The food was varied and the children really liked the menu. Also activities with clay left the best memories for V. Thank you very much! Y
- My children and my friends children have been attending for a while now and they absolutely love it, they have a great relationship with all the staff, they feel safe and they receive great meals. You are brilliant when handling any incidents or accidents and the communication is spot on can't fault a single thing.
- Your healthy camps are a god send for low income working families! Thank you!
- My boy had a fantastic summer at the camp, he's already looking forward for next year. he was glad he met new friends too. Big Thanks to all the staff.
- So grateful for the opportunity! Special thank you for C for always greeting us happy, helpful and friendly! I was worried my eldest wouldn't want to attend and play computer games at home instead, but he enjoyed it very much and made new friends.

- I liked that even tho I had booked the meals online, my kids could change their mind about whether to have a hot meal or sandwich.
 - Thank you so much for all your hard work with the children over the summer I really appreciate it. H had a fab time and didn't want to leave.
 - I would like to make an additional comment to praise the staff. I can't fault them at all. Although they seemed young (maybe I'm just getting old) they were presentable, professional, polite and positive every time I turned up and accordingly to my 2 girls they were fun, caring and supportive throughout the summer. Great work guys.
 - Wonderful staff great fun and a lifesaver for low income families like mine. It was very well run.
 - They would be doing nothing if this wasn't running. We would not be able to afford to feed the children the extra meals.
 - We are delighted that our children tried - and liked - new food. At home we can't get them to try to new things, but around friends and encouragement from the team, they discovered that they like curry and chilli.
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- ❖ Loved the art workshops, made some really nice willow things to give my mum
 - ❖ I am going to ask dad to buy me tools, now I know how to fix bikes
 - ❖ Best bit was spray painting, I did the 'D' ins't it awesome? It will stay here forever!
 - ❖ Is this your job? do you get paid? I didn't know you could do jobs like this, maybe I can come and work with you when I'm older as I love art.
 - ❖ This is actually very chilled, it's good at keeping me calm. I could stay here all day
 - ❖ My brother is never going to believe I made this, it's sooooo cool.
 - ❖ I've learnt how to plait today. I didn't think I could do it as I'm not very good at that sort of thing, but H showed me and now I'm super-fast.
 - ❖ Thank you loads. I have made you some cupcakes for you all.
 - ❖ I loved the Go Karting and Paddle Boarding.
 - ❖ The food was better than I thought. Really good selection.
 - ❖ I have had the best day I've have had in a long time here. Thank you.

We asked them to describe the holiday club in 3 words they said the following (many were repeated): helpful, kind, the best place, amazing, happy place, perfect, fun, safe, supportive, always there, loving, funny, open ears, caring.

Please contact sarah.pengelly@torbay.gov.uk with any questions. Thank you.